



Rayner Stephens

H I G H S C H O O L

Dear families,

I am writing at the end of this half term to update you on school progress towards the current Ofsted Targets and to update you on how school continues to be impacted by the current Covid-19 restrictions. I want to start by thanking our families and the wider community for the ongoing support at what is a very difficult time for everyone. Once again a large number of families, two hundred have engaged in the parent survey and I will include in this letter a summary of the findings and respond to the family voice on areas to improve related to the Ofsted report.

COVID-19 Update

With the significant increases in current cases of Covid-19 it is unlikely that the restrictions and school guidance that is currently in place will be changed in the near future. It has taken sometime for both learners and staff to get used to the 'new normal' everyone has responded really well to keep impact on learning to a minimum and to support each other in the smooth running of the school day. We have conducted regular learner, staff and family voice since reopening and where possible have responded to suggested changes that aid teaching and learning and the school environment at this time. Learning Leaders have conducted detailed learner voice for their year groups and will share the summaries and actions that have been put in place at the virtual information evenings taking place on 23rd November 2020. The majority of surveys have been anonymous but where someone has identified themselves and shared concerns about anxiety or needing additional support these have been forwarded to the inclusion team for further action. 28% of families that completed the survey shared that their child had felt anxiety or stress in returning to school. We have focused form time activities and RSHE sessions in the first half term to support learners returning, however if you feel that your child requires further support that the school is not yet aware of please contact their form tutor in the first instance. In the feedback 94% of parents felt that the information provided before learners returned to school was helpful, 90% said they understood the changes and 95% said they felt confident on the steps they should take if their child presented with Covid-19 symptoms.

The restrictions continue to make some aspects of school life challenging, however the restrictions have supported the school to remain fully open to all year groups throughout the

Achievement **S**uccess **P**rofessionalism **I**ntegrity **R**espect **E**ndeavour

Rayner Stephens High School Yew Tree Lane, Dukinfield, Cheshire, SK16 5BL **Headteacher:** Ms F. Beach
e: admin@rshs.aspireplus.org.uk t: 0161 338 2374 f: 0161 338 9200 w: www.raynerstephens.org.uk



half term and with two confirmed cases that we have had the current bubbles and seating plan systems limited self-isolation to only 18 learners in the first case and 28 learners in the second, which again is much lower when compared to majority of secondary schools where there have been confirmed cases. Although the current restrictions are not what we would want to have in place they have so far allowed the majority of learners to access school consistently since reopening.

Having reviewed the logistics of the zoning that has been put in place we have made the decision to move the learners in Year 9 out of the Science block and into the Design and Technology area of the school. This change will be staged over the first couple of weeks back after the half term and parents and learners that this impacts on will be informed in separate communication. We believe this change will have a positive impact on the learning environment for this year group.

The school had to make changes to the behaviour policy to support the restrictions these are currently being reviewed however, initial finds are showing that learner behaviour both in classes and at social times is significantly better compared to previous years.

In the survey a couple of parents made comments regarding the current changes to the school toilets to support the Covid-19 restrictions, further cosmetic work is taking place on the current KS3 and KS4 blocks over half term and quotes are currently being sought to create a further block of toilets in the South Wing of the school.

In the survey we asked parents to respond to two questions, firstly regarding parents evenings 60% of parents stated that they would prefer to speak to their child's form tutor in a face to face social distancing, with 40% preferring a virtual platform. We received information from the Local Authority last week that at present schools should prepare to provide parents evenings remotely. We are currently setting up a virtual system that should be in place by 10th December 2020 for the Year 11 parents evening.

We also canvassed families' opinions about how best to offer catch up interventions throughout the year to address areas of lost learning due to the school closure. All schools are being provided with £80 per learner to support catch up activities in core lessons of English, maths and Science. Some of this will be delivered through additional small group interventions. Less than 10% of parents supported the idea of catch up sessions on Saturday mornings, so will not be an option that we will pursue. The rest of the responses being evenly split between before or after school sessions and removal from non-core subjects to complete intervention. All learners have completed baseline assessments with Year 7 taking part on baseline tests for English and maths replicating the Year 6 SAT examinations. These have allowed teachers to conduct question level analysis for every individual learner to identify gaps in learning that then are being addressed through changes to the current curriculum in school or through the additional interventions that will continue throughout the rest of the academic year.

We are all aware that the situation regarding Covid-19 continues to be fluid with further restrictions likely to continue for the next half term. I wrote to you earlier this term to share that

the government released new guidance on partial school closures. In the same way that the country now has tiers of restrictions the Department of Education have set out guidance for 'tiered closure' for secondary schools. All schools in the local area are currently running at tier one which is the compulsory use of face masks in communal areas. At tier two schools would be asked to run a one week rota system for learners in Years 7-10 with one week face to face lessons in school and one week remote learning. Year 11 learners would remain in school full time. The government has been very clear that limiting attendance at schools and other education settings should only be done as a last resort, even in areas where a local alert level is 'high' or 'very high'. At this stage we have had no indication that restrictions in our local area would change however the school has a full plan in place were this to change that parents can view on the school website.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our learners and families for their ongoing support in helping us to manage suspected and confirmed cases of coronavirus within the school community. Could I please ask that if, over the half term, any learners develop any symptoms of coronavirus, are having COVID tests or obtain test results, that parents immediately share this information with school via the school's dedicated coronavirus email address:

covid@rshs.aspireplus.org.uk. We will send a reminder to families about coronavirus related absences after the half term break.

School Improvement

Following the publishing of the school's Ofsted report I wrote to families to share the context around the judgements and actions that were already in place to support further improvement. Since September we have continued this work having created a Post Ofsted Action Plan. Due to the category that the school is currently in this plan is monitored by an external monitoring board to ensure that rapid progress on the key areas of improvement takes place; this is reviewed monthly. Below is an update on the actions the school has taking this half term to address the five areas for improvement identified in the report.

Improving the curriculum

Since September all learners have completed baseline assessments that have then been analysed by their teachers and curriculum leaders and then the curriculum plans have been reviewed to support the lost learning. Additional support has been funded by the Trust to use subject and Whole School leaders in Education to review department curriculum plans and current provision with recommendations being used to further improve provision. The curriculum model for Year 9 has been further adapted with the KS3 rubric curriculum, that was highlighted as having a positive impact at KS3 in the Ofsted report being embedded in all subjects in this year group.

Ensuring all staff understand the recent changes to the curriculum

The school is continuing with the Transforming Teacher Programme that was paused during lockdown. Teachers will complete the first years of this professional development programme in

January at which point the focus for CPD for the rest of the year moves to subject specific pedagogy. Again the Trust has engaged with a number of external subject specialist leaders in education particularly in English, Maths and Science to further review the current areas for development and to support training opportunities throughout the rest of the academic year.

SEND provision

The school continues to work closely with parents and the Local Authority to identify learners with additional needs, we are aware due to lockdown that waiting lists for key tests that have to take place with external agencies have considerably increased. In the meantime the school is working to adapt provision as much as possible for these individual learners. Next half term the SEND department will be conducting parent voice with send learners to look at current practice which we trust parents will engage with.

Behaviour and attendance data for SEND learners has significantly improved this half term compared to the same time last year.

This half term all learners in all year groups have completed cognitive testing that has been analysed and the results have been shared with teaching colleagues to aid differentiation and highlight specific learners for extra support. The current Covid-19 restrictions are making some aspects of in class support more challenging and we are using training opportunities to highlight new methods and guidance that is being shared with us to meet these needs at this time.

Extra-Curricular

The development of extra-curricular provision is extremely difficult at this point in time, however all departments have created an action plan for increasing their extra-curricular offers as and when the restrictions around Covid-19 are relaxed. Learning Leaders have conducted surveys on extra-curricular engagement for learners in their year groups about their previous and current extracurricular activities both in school and in the community. This term the Student Council is also conducting learner voice so that staff and learners can design a new extracurricular offer that provides learners with extra-curricular activities that they want to participate in.

Behaviour outside of lessons

Social time and transitions across school are significantly different this year than previously due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The changes to staggered breaks and lunch time and now that the majority of learners stay in their classroom with the staff moving has definitely impacted positively on learners behaviour choices outside of lessons. Staff and learner voice has supported the data that highlights these improvements. We are closely monitoring the changes that we have been put in place and as and when restrictions change ensure that many of the positive aspects of the systems that have been put in place at this time are continued in any further changes that are made to the logistics of the school day throughout the year.

In the parent survey common areas identified for improvement were homework, permanent staffing and parental communication. Some parents suggested an online app would be helpful to support communication and homework. The school has purchased a system and the background set up is currently taking place. Dr Potter will be writing to parents in the near future with future information, the aim is for the service to be accessible to parents by mid-November. The app does have a function to support parents seeing what homework has been set and if it has been handed in by their child. During the next half term Mr Morris and Mrs Lund will be completing full reviews of the schools homework policies for KS3 and KS4 with any changes incorporating the new system from Insight to share homework. Staff and learners will need additional support and training on how to use this function of the app effectively in line with the new homework policy we expect this function of the app will be operational in January.

Regarding staffing the school recruitment and retention has been considerably higher in the past two years with very little movement in the past academic year. Current staffing changes due to maternity have been covered by subject specialists. As we move into the new Stamford Park Trust we will gain greater access to teachers in their training year that will further support our recruitment processes. All schools are expecting negative impact on staffing due to the Covid-19 self-isolation restrictions, currently this has not impacted Rayner Stephens as much as we may have first anticipated however we have plans in place to ensure where possible any class teacher isolating can still participate in the learner's lesson delivery through the virtual platform of TEAMS. I am very pleased to also be able to inform you that the Trust is currently in the process of recruiting an Executive Headteacher that will work across the Trust Secondary Schools this is a very positive development in building capacity for improvement at a strategic level and I look forward to sharing more information with you next half term.

I realise that this update includes a large amount of information and I thank you for taking the time to read my letter in full. I trust that you have found the information helpful. I would also like to thank you for your continued support at this difficult time. There are many barriers currently in place that make our usual level of communication and access to members of staff more difficult. We understand that everyone is finding it difficult and the changes have put new and difficult pressure on families as well as staff and learners. Thank you for your patience and supportive comments in the communication we have received from you. I wish you all a safe and enjoyable half term and look forward to continuing to work together during the rest of the academic year.

Yours sincerely,



Fay Beach